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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 006352

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [BG](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: JI LEADER ASSURES CDA THAT JI HAS NO TIES TO JMB

Classified By: A/Pol-Econ Counselor David Renz; reason 1.4(d)

11. (C) Summary. Jamaat-E-Islami Leader Muhammed Kamaruzzaman called on Charge December 21 to deliver a message that Jamaat-E-Islami Bangladesh (JIB) was not involved with Jamiat Ul Mujahidin Bangladesh (JMB). The discussion also involved Kamaruzzaman's involvement within Islami Chatra Shibir, JIB's relationship with other parties, and the recent bombing campaign. End Summary.

We're Not Involved with JMB

12. (C) Kamaruzzaman met with CDA Chammas and poloff (notetaker) December 21 to deliver the message that JIB was not involved with JMB. He had already visited the French, the U.K., the Norwegian, and the Chinese embassies, he said.

13. (C) Kamaruzzaman said newspapers are offering three arguments as proof of the JIB/JMB link. The first argument was that JIB wants Islamic law, as does JMB. Kamaruzzaman said anyone could push for Islamic law, but the method in which they pursue the cause is different. According to Kamaruzzaman, JIB abides by three policies: 1) social change through should occur through the constitutional, democratic, electoral process; 2) no one would be involved in armed struggle; 3) the party opposes a military dictatorship.

14. (C) The second argument Kamaruzzaman said the newspapers were presenting for the JIB/JMB link was that relatives of JIB are members of JMB. Kamaruzzaman said the country is densely populated and it is easy to find people that have relations with members of the government. There are relatives of the opposition Awami League that are also members of JMB, he argued. When asked, Kamaruzzaman said there were no current JIB members that are members of JMB. He said that a member of JMB can be a former JIB member, but will never return to the JIB party.

15. (C) Finally, Kamaruzzaman dismissed arguments that JIB's loose ties to radical Islamic student group Islami Chatra Shibir (ICS) "proved" that JIB supports violence and the JMB. JIB does not actively support or control ICS, he said, but merely offers guidance. Moreover, people join groups for many reasons when they are young, reasons they later abandon or renounce. Kamaruzzaman explained that there were two types of ICS members, full members and activists. He said that there were only about 2,500 full members, but over 150,000 activists. He added that most of the individuals who have been involved in ICS did not join JIB, but pursued careers as civil servants. That said, the leadership of JIB was based on ICS involvement. Kamaruzzaman said he was the leader of ICS while attending Dhaka University.

Government Will Act Forcefully

16. (C) Kamaruzzaman admitted that the government did not have the situation under control, but that the government would take strong actions. These actions included encouraging rallies and awareness. Kamaruzzaman said the government would also continue to arrest leaders/members to stop activities.

17. (C) Kamaruzzaman said the bombings are meant to destabilize the government. Who benefits from that, he asked rhetorically? The Awami League, of course, he said, which claims the BNP has failed and needs to resign. Islamists certainly are not benefited. Islamic parties are being blamed for the bombings, which gives the Islamic parties a bad name. The bombings have destabilized the democratic process, which is the opposite of what JIB advocates. Finally, the bombings give credence to the arguments of those who for years have claimed Bangladesh is a failed state and extremist supporter, which only further undermines what the government is trying to accomplish. The CDA noted that Kamaruzzaman's comments show a continuation of the blame game; in this sense, JIB was blaming the Awami League for the attacks. Kamaruzzaman disagreed, his statements earlier in the conversation notwithstanding.

No Strain between JIB and JNP

18. (C) Kamaruzzaman said the relationship between the JIB

and the BNP remained on firm grounds; it is not strained. Nor was the JIB's relationship with BNP Joint Secretary Tariq Rahman under strain. Kamaruzzaman had a strong relationship with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, but did not have a strong relationship with her son. The recent election where the Hindi candidate won the seat in a JIB stronghold was not viewed as a bad thing. JIB did not object to the outcome; rather, they viewed the election as free and fair.

19. (C) CDA noted JIB's past support of the Awami League. Shifting support to the BNP gives the impression that JIB is opportunistic and that their loyalties are flexible to whichever party is in power. Kamaruzzaman claimed that JIB aligns itself with parties in the interest of the nation, nothing more. Kamaruzzaman added that there are beliefs that JIB should be dropped from the cabinet to end the bombings. Kamaruzzaman added that he did not believe this was a valid solution, nor did he advocate a national government.

Comment

10. (C) Kamaruzzaman clearly wanted to rehabilitate JIB's reputation following the recent drumbeat of press articles linking JIB and JMB and to defuse suspicions that JIB was in some way involved in the JMB bombing campaign. Unfortunately, his well prepared, party-line monologue offered little of substance or dialogue. More striking was what Kamaruzzaman did not say. He offered no solution to end the bombing campaign nor did he suggest any role for JIB in stopping the violence. End comment.
CHAMMAS